



Road toward Racial Equity Policy

The Washington State School Directors' Association is the lead policy maker for school boards in our state. When considering creating policy for racial equity, WSSDA determined that a model policy could not address the broad range of the conditions of equity across our school districts. WSSDA believes that the development of such policy must be done at the local level to reflect the conditions and aspirations of the community.

The Aspen Institute, a non-partisan education and policy studies group (2009), stated the following in its preface to "Constructing a Racial Equity Theory of Change (p. 9):

"Circumstances differ from place to place, so such tactics must be tailored by stakeholders intimately familiar with their particular civic, institutional, leadership and racial contexts."

In a meeting of WSSDA's Equity and Access Caucus, a question was asked by a school director to his colleagues that got to the heart of the matter. "How do you start this work towards building racial equity policy?" That is the question WSSDA addresses to support our school boards in their desire to establish policy for equity.

What is your district's vision for racial equity?

Before action takes place, you must know your direction or vision.

Following is an example of the steps a school board can take to begin the process. It includes potential data, guiding questions and other elements for your board to consider.

How to start

Member of the board or the superintendent requests consideration of a racial equity vision for your school district.

Guiding Questions

1. Which data do we want to consider, based on proportionality:

- attendance
 - graduation rates
 - 9th grade credit attainment
 - results from state achievement assessments
 - recruiting and retaining teachers and administrators of color
- (These are only samples of possible data or considerations.)
2. Based upon this data, are we making progress in reducing disproportionality for our students, or do we remain at the status quo over time?
 3. Are we hiring and retaining staff that reflects our student population?
 4. Does our district need to take the step for a vision of racial equity that would communicate to all stakeholders the direction our district aspires to take to eliminate institutional and structural racism and give stronger direction and commitment to our efforts?

Resources for constructing and enacting a racial equity vision

- LEAD Toolkit: Oregon Leadership Network and Education Northwest
<http://leadtool.educationnorthwest.org/about-the-lead-tool>
- Constructing and enacting an equity vision. Interview with Vicki Nishioka, Senior Research Advisor and Rob Larson, Director, Strategic Relations.
<http://leadtool.educationnorthwest.org/ten-equitable-practices/constructing-enacting-an-equity-vision>

Action Step One

The School Board requests that the Superintendent develop a process for building a vision of racial equity and bring it to the board for consideration.

Examples

1. The district forms a committee focused on the district's progress in eliminating structural and institutionalized racism.
 - Identify stakeholders that represent the racial diversity of your district.
 - Remember to give voice to those groups who face barriers to their voices being heard.
 - Include a school board member as a liaison.
2. The superintendent/designee works with the committee, using it as an advisory group to guide the process to develop a vision for racial equity that reflects the local community and its aspirations its children.

- The proposal, with timelines, is presented to the board by the superintendent and committee for approval.

The proposal should contain the following:

- Outcomes for the project
- Timeline for completion
- Roles and responsibilities of personnel ,committee and school board
- Resources necessary to meet the outcomes (budget)
- Strategies for language access
- Outreach efforts that are inclusive and assertive, with district personnel going to apartment complexes, churches, etc.
- The process must give voice to non-dominant students, their families, and community members.

Resource

Community Based Organizations (CBO) that focus on issues of equity and opportunity may be helpful in getting access to stakeholders representing non-dominant groups. A short list of some of the CBOs in the Puget Sound Educational Service District is provided below.

| Community Based Organizations Participating in Community School Partnerships through Race to the Top | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|--|
| Org Name | Contact | Title | |
| White Center Community Development Association | Sili Savusa | Executive Director | Sili Savusa <sili@wccda.org> |
| East African Community Services | | | |
| South East Seattle Education Coalition | | | - |
| Somali Family Safety Task Force | | | |
| Vietnamese Friendship Association | | | |
| Somali Youth and Family Club | | | |
| Saint Vincent de Paul | | | - |
| Coalition for Refugees of Burma | Erin Okuno | Executive Director | erin@allfivesinfive.org |
| Community Network Council | Farhiya Mohamed | | Farhiya79@hotmail.com |
| Iraqi Community Center of WA | James Hong | Executive Director | james.hong@vfaseattle.org |
| Good Shepard Youth Outreach | | | - |
| Stemtac | | | |
| Open Doors for Multicultural Families | | | |
| Community Café Collaborative | Hamdi Abdulle | Executive Director | hamdi@syouthclub.org |
| One America | | | Info@weareoneamerica.org |

Action Step 2

The school board adopts the proposal and budget, and directs the superintendent to implement the plan for building a racial equity vision.

Action Step 3

The engagement plan for defining a vision of racial equity is executed, with the superintendent using the Equity Committee as the advisory group to select language for the vision before it is brought to the school board.

Action Step Four

The School Board takes action to approve the vision statement for racial equity.

Action Step Five

The board tasks the superintendent with developing a racial equity policy that gives guidance on what the district believes and aspires to regarding racial equity and what the district will do to reach their vision.

Example

Beliefs

Our school district will only be excellent when families of color are empowered as equal partners to influence, inform and impact decisions throughout our school system.

What we will do

To realize our beliefs, our school district will:

Involve members of our community who are racially representative of our district and honor their multiple racial and cultural perspectives.

Action Step Six

With the Equity committee as an advisory group, the superintendent develops a draft of the racial equity policy that reflects the language and vision of internal and external stakeholders.

Structure of Policy

1. What are the foundational beliefs held by the stakeholders towards racial equity?
2. What do the stakeholders aspire for all students?
3. What is the district committed to enacting in regards to the beliefs and aspirations around racial equity?
4. What will the board authorize for the superintendent to do to put the policy into practice?

Action Step Seven

The school board takes action to adopt the racial equity policy in to the 00 category of policy.

Action Step Eight

The school board tasks the superintendent to develop an implementation plan for enacting the racial equity policy across all departments and schools. This is a multi-year plan including procedures as deemed necessary.

Model Implementation Criteria (Ontario, Canada)

The ministry recognizes that school boards are at different stages in the implementation of an equity and inclusive education policy. The ministry expects boards to demonstrate continuous improvement, so that progress is evident on an annual basis towards the goal of embedding the equity and inclusive education policy into all operations of the board. Implementation plans will:

- contain clearly stated annual objectives and measurable outcomes at both the board and school levels;
- reflect consultation with community partners, and show evidence of active and ongoing partnerships with students, parents, and diverse communities;
- contain indicators for measuring and evaluating progress.

Resources

- Equity Inclusive Education: Policy Development Guide Policy Development Implementation
- <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

