

Equity and Diversity**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for educational equity for all students to ensure the elimination of bias, particularly institutionalized racism, and cultural bias, as factors affecting student achievement and learning experiences, and to promote teaching and learning and work environments that welcome, respect, and value strength in diversity.

Equity in education is about inclusiveness and social justice and not to be used interchangeably with the principles of equality. The principle of educational equity goes beyond formal equality where students are treated the same. Instead, educational equity fosters a barrier-free environment in which all students have the opportunity to benefit equally. Equity is achieved when there is sufficient evidence that each child has a high-quality educational experience, and outcomes and successes are not predicated by a student's subgroup.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy the following terms shall be defined as:

- A. "Educational equity" means raising the achievement of all students while 1.) narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students, and 2.) eliminating the racial or cultural predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories including rates of graduation.
- B. "Institutional racism" means the collective failure of a public or private organization, implicitly or explicitly, to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their race/color, language, alienage, culture or ethnic origin which can be seen or detected in practices, processes, systems, attitudes, and behavior. It looks beyond individual acts of prejudice to the systemic biases that may be built into institutions. These systemic biases discriminate against and disadvantage people of color through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, or racial stereotyping while maintaining the privilege of others.
- C. "Diversity" includes characteristics of persons including, but not limited to race/color, culture, language, color, creed or religion, national origin, gender, alienage, mental and physical ability, age, marital status, family structure, citizenship status, sexual orientation, sexual expression or identity, economic status, veteran status, and any other protected class in conformance with federal, state, and local laws.
- D. "District staff" includes all faculty and staff, consultants, and contractors employed by the Bethany Public School District (District).

Policy

The inclusion of all students and families supports District goals to increase student engagement and academic performance.

Each child and member of the learning community deserves a respectful learning environment in which their cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic background is valued and contributes to successful academic outcomes. The responsibility for student success is shared by the Bethany Board of Education (Board), District staff, students, families and the community. The District is committed to identifying and correcting practices and policies that perpetuate racial disparities and institutional racism in all forms in order to provide all of its students with the opportunity to succeed. Learning and work environments are enriched and improved by the contributions, perspectives, and very presence of diverse participants.

The District is committed to the success of every student and to our mission statement and goals. Persistent achievement and opportunity gaps are unacceptable if we are to meet the goals of these statements and our moral obligations to our students, their families, and our community as a whole. These gaps are contrary to our belief that all children can learn and succeed. Adult actions must not contribute to the perpetuation of inequities that create barriers to student success. Furthermore, adult actions must concentrate on the elimination of gaps, particularly those that are predicated on a student's race, ethnicity, home language, personal characteristics, alienage or culture, and on the assurance of educational equity between students.

The Board is committed to hiring the most qualified employees who will bring their unique talents and skills into the District. The District shall employ staffing processes that support and promote cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in its staff through recruitment, employment, training and retention of highly qualified employees that reflect the diversity of our students and community. It is important that all students see themselves as part of the education system. As such, the District is committed to increasing the recruitment and retention of highly qualified diverse staff.

The District shall offer opportunities for all staff to improve culturally responsive instructional practices, curriculum, and assessments in order to increase our individual and collective capacity to effectively teach our student population. Practices, procedures, and programs that result in over or under-representation of any group of students, compared to peers, shall be subject to close review to assure that such results are due to legitimate educational, social or emotional needs. Practices that do not meet this close review shall be modified or eliminated. Teachers, Administrators and District staff shall collaborate to establish and implement research-based culturally responsive instructional practices, curriculum, and assessments.

The District shall offer opportunities for all staff to improve its cultural competencies in serving a diverse student body and community. The District staff shall work together to increase their individual and collective capacity to effectively teach a culturally, racially and ethnically diverse student population and serve culturally, racially and ethnically diverse families and communities. The District shall provide professional development to staff specifically designed to strengthen employee's knowledge and skills for eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps between groups of students. The District shall seek partnerships with outside agencies, organizations and persons who have demonstrated culturally specific expertise to assist the District in meeting its equitable education and business goals, including, but not limited to: 1.) government agencies, 2.) non-profit organizations, 3.) businesses, and 4.) other community groups that support educational equity and cultural competencies.

The District is committed to promoting and providing equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, facilities and supports, even when this means differentiating resource allocations on the basis of student needs. Resource allocation shall support the definition of educational equity adopted in this policy while complying with state and federal funding mandates.

The District shall promote the diversification of its vendor and supplier corps in accordance with law and District policy.

The Board, Superintendent, and staff commit to using an equity verification protocol to ensure all future policies have a significant impact on the equitable advancement of learning and resource allocation for the success of every child. This commitment also includes conducting assessments on policies that are periodically reviewed and updated through the policy development process.

Responsibility

- A. The Board shall consider the values stated in this policy in conducting its business and in exercising its responsibilities to the people of this community.
- B. The Superintendent shall establish in accordance with this policy such plans as may be necessary and appropriate to accomplish its purpose and intent. Plans established shall include clear accountability for actions and oversight.
- C. The Superintendent shall annually report to the Board and the community regarding District performance goals on academic achievement and progress toward meeting these goals and closing the achievement gap.
- D. Families are partners with the District in a collaborative effort to address achievement and opportunity gaps.
- E. Students are partners in their academic achievement. School attendance and engagement are essential to reduce achievement and opportunity gaps that exist.
- F. The Board, Superintendent, and employees will work with students and families to identify barriers to achievement and opportunities for academic success.

Legal References: Connecticut General Statutes § 10-15c
Connecticut General Statutes § 10-153
Connecticut General Statutes § 17a-101
Connecticut General Statutes § 46a-60
Connecticut State Board of Education “Position Statement on Culturally Responsive Education” adopted May 4, 2011
Title VII, Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. 2000e, et seq.
29 CFR 1604.11, EEOC Guidelines on Sex Discrimination
Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.
34 CFR § 106.8(b), OCR Guidelines for Title IX
Definitions, OCR Guidelines on Sexual Harassment, Fed. Reg. Vol. 62, #49, 29 CFR § 1606.8 (a) 62 Fed Reg. 12033 (March 13, 1997) and 66 Fed. Reg. 5512 (January 19, 2001)

MISSION – GOALS – OBJECTIVES

0523(d)

Legal References: Section 8525, ESEA as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act
Meritor Savings Bank. FSB v. Vinson, 477 U.S. 57 (1986)
Faragher v. City of Boca Raton, No. 97-282 (U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 1998)
Gebbs v. Lago Vista Indiana School District, No. 99-1866, (U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 1998)
Davis v. Monro County Board of Education, No. 97-843, (U.S. Supreme Court, May 24, 1999)
The Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Act of 1974, as amended, 38 U.S.C § 4212
Title II of the General Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008
The Americans with Disabilities Act as amended by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008
Public Law 111-256
Meacham v. Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory, 128 S.Ct. 2395, 76 U.S.L.W. 4488 (2008)
Federal Express Corporation v. Holowecki, 128 S.Ct. 1147, 76 U.S.L.W. 4110 (2008)
Kentucky Retirement Systems v. EEOC, 128 S.Ct. 2361, 76 U.S.L.W. 4503 (2008)
Sprint/United Management Co. v. Mendelsohn, 128 S.Ct. 1140, 76 U.S.L.W. 4107 (2008)

Policy adopted: January 8, 2020
Policy reviewed: February 8, 2023