## 106 EQUITY

## I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure equity and inclusion for every student, staff, and family member in School District 197. Additionally, this policy establishes equity as an essential value in our governance, leadership, policies, programs, operations, and practices.

As our District strategic framework states, we believe:

People thrive when they feel connected, trusted and affirmed.

> To that end, this policy will make it a priority to create the conditions so that every student, staff, family and School District community member feels a sense of belonging, and that they are valued and heard.

Our diversity makes us stronger.

> To that end, this policy serves to affirm this belief by recognizing the value of a wide range of perspectives and lived experiences and their important contributions to our School District community.

We are all accountable for removing barriers and creating equitable systems.

> Through this policy, the school board recognizes the historical legacy and compounding impact of the systems, structures and practices that have created and continue to afford advantages to some groups while further marginalizing and perpetuating inequities for others.

Therefore, we seek the elimination of inequity in our systems, structures and practices as a School District. We recognize that the responsibility for ensuring equitable access, opportunities, participation and outcomes falls on the adults in the system.

## II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

School District 197 is on an equity journey. While there has been work done previously and

some progress has been made, there remains much to do.

The School District is committed to equitable access and opportunities for all members of our School District community, including students, families and staff.

Creating equitable access and opportunities is dependent upon having inclusive policies and practices that represent all students, and providing each student increased access to and creating meaningful participation in high-quality learning experiences where each student realizes positive outcomes. Educational equity benefits everyone and prepares all students to thrive in a racially and culturally diverse local, national and global community.

School District 197 is committed to the success of every student in each of our schools. The school board recognizes the history of academic, discipline, and social-emotional disparities that have occurred in many schools across our country based on race and ethnicity, language, immigration status, socioeconomic status, sex, and gender identity and sexual orientation (2SLGBTQ+ status). The academic and discipline gaps are contrary to the fact that all students can learn and succeed in our schools, and they are unacceptable if we are to meet our School District mission of caring relationships, equitable practices and high achievement for all. Student outcomes must not be predictable based on student demographics or school attended.

The school board also recognizes that it is the responsibility of its administration and staff to remove barriers and create systems to ensure educational equity, which will require the allocation and reallocation of resources. School District 197 will actively work to interrupt, dismantle, and eliminate racism and other forms of inequity by identifying, acknowledging, confronting and disrupting beliefs and systems that marginalize children and their families. This work will be informed by evidence, including research, data, and the voices of marginalized communities.

The school board further recognizes that every student deserves a responsive, affirming and inclusive learning environment in which their cultural norms and experiences are valued and contribute to successful academic and social-emotional outcomes. School District 197 recognizes the value in validating a student's own understanding of themself, their identity, their culture, and their experiences in our schools.

## III. DEFINITIONS

"2SLGBTQ+" is an acronym that stands for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning and additional sexual orientations and gender identities while the plus reflects the countless affirmative ways in which people choose to self-identify.

"Equity" means giving each person the (individualized) opportunities and access they need to be successful. This is different from equality, which means giving each person equal (the same) opportunities and access without recognition of their unique needs.

“Educational equity” means the condition of justice, fairness and inclusion in our systems of education so that all students (including those who are a part of traditionally marginalized communities) have access to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potentials.

“Culturally affirming” means treating others’ culture and experiences with respect and high regard in order to affirm their value. This is done through practices, behaviors and policies that thoroughly acknowledge and proactively seek to affirm students’ cultural identities and cultural assets as integral to their positive self-concept and their academic and social well-being.

“Culturally responsive” means having the ability to understand cultural differences, recognize potential biases, and look beyond differences to work productively with children, families, and communities whose cultural contexts are different from one's own.

“Disparity” means a noticeable and usually significant difference or dissimilarity.

“Gender identity” means a person’s deeply held knowledge of their own gender, which can include being a man, woman, or another gender. Gender identity is an innate part of a person’s identity. One’s gender identity may or may not align with society’s expectations with the sex they were assigned at birth (male, female, or intersex). In School District 197, individuals are encouraged to use their self-identified name and pronouns.

“Institutional racism” means the biases that may be built into the policies, practices, and processes of institutions. These systemic biases discriminate against and disadvantage people of color through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness or racial stereotyping. As a result, these systemic biases create different and predictable outcomes for different racial groups, typically maintaining an advantage for white individuals and simultaneously maintaining a disadvantage for individuals of color.

“Marginalize” means to treat as insignificant or unimportant or inferior. It involves social exclusion that results from a group having less access or opportunity than other groups.

“Racial consciousness” means understanding multiple theories of race and ethnicity, including but not limited to racial formation, processes of racialization, and intersectionality. Racial consciousness, in regard to intersectionality, means understanding the impact of the intersection of race and ethnicity with other forms of difference, including socioeconomic status, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation (2SLGBTQ+ status), religion, national origin, immigration status, language, ability, and age.

“School culture” means the shared beliefs, norms, and values among the members of the school which can be observed from the behaviors of the members.

## IV. COMMITMENTS

A. **Diverse Classrooms and Schools:** School District 197 commits to promoting equity in educational programs and extracurricular activities. Student representation in our classrooms and programs should reflect the diversity of our schools. This includes socioeconomic status, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation, religion, national origin, immigration status, language, ability, and age.

B. **Teacher and Leader Quality and Diversity:** School District 197 commits to recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse, culturally responsive, and equity-minded workforce. This includes ongoing professional development focused on equity, gender inclusion, racial consciousness, and cultural responsiveness.

C. **Equitable Resource Allocation:** School District 197 commits to prioritizing the allocation of resources, including but not limited to, curriculum, facilities, staffing, support services, technology, transportation, and activities, in a manner that ensures all students, including historically marginalized students, have the access and opportunity necessary to succeed.

D. **Equitable Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment:** Aligned to our curriculum review cycle, School District 197 commits to selecting and implementing curriculum that is culturally relevant and representative of our student population. We also commit to including equity in the rubrics used in our decision-making process for curriculum adoption. School District 197 commits to culturally affirming, inclusive, and responsive instructional practices and to equitable assessment and grading practices that foster motivation, are bias-resistant, and accurately reflect student learning.

E. **Equitable Learning in Classroom and Other School Environments:** School District 197 commits to culturally affirming, inclusive, and responsive community building and behavior management practices. Our physical spaces and routines will be reflective of the diversity of our students' identities. We also commit to building strong, supportive relationships with each student while holding them accountable to high expectations. School District 197 commits to behavior support and discipline practices that reduce disparities in suspensions. When there is harm, we commit to interrupting the harm regardless of the intent, while also committing to restoring relationships within the classroom and school.

F. **Equitable Student Leadership and Voice:** School District 197 commits to seeking to gather and understand student perspectives (including those from historically marginalized groups) in decision-making processes, creating spaces for student groups, and providing leadership opportunities.

G. **Equitable Family and Community Partnerships:** School District 197 commits to building two-way linguistic and cultural bridges between the School District and the various communities it serves. We will seek representation reflective of our student

demographics on District advisory committees, provide spaces for family groups, provide cultural liaisons, provide family education, and provide interpretation and translation tools and resources. We commit to using these resources to better understand the perspectives, goals, and priorities of the communities we serve and to seek ongoing input and feedback.

## V. SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES & ACCOUNTABILITY

School District 197 believes education is a shared responsibility among staff, students, families, and the community.

A. **School Board:** The school board will ensure that educational equity efforts are in alignment with the District strategic framework. The school board will provide and allocate resources for educational equity. The school board will hold the superintendent accountable for annual progress toward the commitments of this policy. The school board will hold the superintendent accountable for supporting staff in implementing this policy. The school board will review and update District policies in accordance with the four-way equity test:

   i. How does this help to provide opportunities for all students, including students who have historically been underserved, underrepresented, or disadvantaged by the current system?
   ii. How does this help to ensure equitable access for all?
   iii. How does this help to eliminate barriers (structural, process, financial, etc) based on race and ethnicity, language, immigration status, ability, socioeconomic status, sex, or gender identity and sexual orientation (2SLGBTQ+ status)?
   iv. How does this ensure the same rigorous standards for academic performance exist for all students?

B. **Superintendent:** The superintendent shall create procedures and guidelines for the implementation of this policy. Annually, the superintendent or designee, will provide a report to the school board regarding progress on the commitments outlined in this policy. Progress will also be communicated to the community in the District's annual report. In addition to the annual report, the superintendent will ensure ongoing communication with families and the broader community about the District's equity initiatives related to its strategic framework and the commitments in this policy. The superintendent will hold administration accountable for making progress on the commitments. The superintendent will require each site and the District to set annual equity goals. The superintendent will actively cultivate a School District culture that prioritizes equity and recognizes, responds to, and remedy inequities in its practices and systems. The superintendent will provide support to staff responsible for implementing this policy and hold

administration accountable to supporting staff in the implementation of this policy.

C. **Administration:** District and site administration will actively cultivate department and school cultures that prioritize equity and recognize, respond to, and remedy inequities in its practices and systems. Administration will support staff in implementing this policy. District and site administration will set annual equity specific goals and action plans and report out progress and results to the superintendent or designee. District and site administration will engage in ongoing equity professional development aimed at increasing their cultural awareness and their ability to be culturally responsive and equity-minded. Administration will provide and align resources to the commitments in this policy and the goals and action plans of sites and District departments. District and site administrators will regularly seek the input and perspectives that reflect the diversity of students in the School District. Administration will strive to recruit, hire and retain culturally responsive and equity-minded staff whose backgrounds and experiences are reflective of student demographics in the District.

D. **School District Staff:** School district staff, including administration, will, within the parameters of their various duties and responsibilities, adhere to and execute the equity-based plans developed to meet the commitments named in this policy. School District staff will demonstrate the values outlined by this policy as they go about their daily work. School District staff will actively contribute to the efforts of their site or department in meeting its annual equity goal. School District staff will engage in ongoing equity professional development aimed at increasing their cultural awareness and their ability to be culturally responsive and equity-minded. School District staff are further responsible for making suggestions to the appropriate authority to improve the ability of the District to live up to the commitments named in this policy.

E. **Students:** Students are partners in their academic achievement and personal growth. Students can demonstrate this partnership by providing feedback to the District, advocating for themselves, taking ownership of their learning, growing toward their goals, supporting the learning environment, and making positive contributions to the school culture.

School District 197 acknowledges the important role of student voice and student leadership. Through intentional inclusion and engagement, students will be encouraged to regularly share their voice and leadership as the District actively works to create more equitable systems and opportunities.

F. **Families and Community:** Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring students attend school. The District is responsible for encouraging ongoing partnerships with families and communities that reflect its diversity. Parents/guardians are encouraged to partner with schools and school staff in

culturally meaningful ways. School District 197 will encourage partnership through opportunities to volunteer, ongoing communication, parent/guardian education, and opportunities for parent/guardian participation in decision-making. We will further support community connections and collaborations with groups and organizations that reflect the diversity of our students.

## VI. RELATED POLICIES

It is the policy of the District to maintain a safe and supportive learning and educational environment that is free from harassment, intimidation, violence, and/or bullying and free from discrimination.

Complaints alleging discrimination, harassment, violence or bullying should be made according to the procedures in the policies below. For more information about Equal Education Opportunity, including information about complaints alleging violations, refer to Policy 102. For information about the types of conduct that violate the School District's policy on harassment and violence and the District's procedures for addressing such complaints, refer to the School District's policy on harassment and violence (Policy 413). For information about the types of conduct that violate the School District's policy on bullying and the school district's procedures for addressing such complaints, refer to the District's policy on bullying (Policy 514).

For information about the types of conduct that violate the District's sex discrimination policies and procedures for complaints, refer to Policy 522. For information about the types of conduct that constitute disability discrimination and how to make a complaint, refer to District Policies 402 and 521. Questions related to District Policy 401 Equal Employment Opportunity should be referred to the Director of Human Resources.

## VII. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

A. This policy shall be given to each school district employee at the time of initial employment with the school district.
B. The school district will develop a method for the regular review of this policy by all employees.
C. This policy shall be referenced in the family handbook and the student rights and responsibilities handbook.

***References:*** Minnesota Department of Education's Equity Commitments
Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board's Standards of Effective Practice

***Cross References:*** District Policy 102 Equal Education Opportunity
District Policy 401 Equal Employment Opportunity
District Policy 402 Disability Nondiscrimination

District Policy 413 Harassment & Violence
District Policy 503 Student Attendance
District Policy 514 Bullying Prohibition
District Policy 521 Student Disability Nondiscrimination
District Policy 522 Title IX Sex Nondiscrimination Policy, Grievance, Procedures and Process

**POLICY ADOPTED:** August 21, 2023
**POLICY REVIEWED/REVISED:** August 18, 2025
**Monitoring Method:** Administrative Review
**Monitoring Frequency:** Annually