

Board Policy

Equity, Inclusivity, and Diversity in Education

Eastern Suffolk BOCES is committed to creating and maintaining a positive and inclusive academic and professional environment where all students and employees, especially those currently and historically marginalized, feel safe, included, welcomed, and accepted, and experience a sense of belonging and academic success.

Generally Accepted Beliefs and Agreements

All students and employees deserve to have equal access to opportunity. This freedom is fundamental to our mission and is extended to everyone without exception. However, ESBOCES also recognizes that students and employees have been historically marginalized due to inequities associated with aspects of their identities and their contexts, including, but not limited to, race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender (including gender identity and expression). Racism, discrimination, and marginalization of any people or groups of people, whether intentional or not, have no place in ESBOCES or our community. Such actions damage not only those individuals and groups at which they are directed, but also our community as a whole. ESBOCES is committed to addressing these inequities and helping each and every student and employee to equitably access learning and professional opportunities to enable them all to thrive and to build a better society.

Goals

The goal of ESBOCES is to provide equitable, inclusive and diverse opportunities for all students and employees to reach their highest potential. ESBOCES will strive to develop the individual and organizational knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices to create culturally responsive learning and working environments for all students and employees. Differences will not just be seen as strengths, but they will be nourished, celebrated, and welcomed because they are what make people unique.

In order to truly realize this goal, it is imperative that the Board, its officers, and employees, be conversant in the historical injustices and inequalities that have shaped our society and to recognize and eliminate the institutional barriers, including racism and biases, that contribute to the pervasive, disparate educational outcomes within our Agency. Equitable and inclusive environments aim to understand, identify, address, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and disparities that may limit access and opportunities for students and employees.

The District Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer or designee(s) will ensure that curriculum and instructional materials reflect the Board's commitment to educational equity. All curriculum materials shall be reviewed and examined for bias on an ongoing basis, and by the appropriate administrator. Class instructional activities and extracurricular programs shall be designed to provide opportunities for cross-cultural interactions that foster respect for diversity.

Educational equity and inclusivity is an ongoing process that requires shared commitment and leadership if ESBOCES is to meet the ever-evolving society, unique learning needs of all students, and diverse backgrounds of our communities and schools.

ESBOCES believes students, employees, families and community are our greatest strength and diversity is viewed as an asset. Diversity means the condition of being different or having differences, including, but not limited to, sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, age, socioeconomic class, religion, and ability, and other human differences. Embracing these diversities and moving beyond tolerance and celebration to inclusivity and respect will help ESBOCES reach our goal of creating a community that ensures that each and every voice is heard and valued.

Accountability, Transparency and Review

The ESBOCES Board, its officers and employees, accept responsibility and will hold themselves and each other accountable for every student having full access to quality education, qualified teachers, challenging curriculum, full opportunity to learn, and sufficient, individually-tailored support for learning so they can achieve at excellent levels in academic and other student outcomes. ESBOCES will commit time, energy and resources to develop a more equitable, inclusive, and diverse welcoming environment for all students, parents/persons in parental relation and staff. To this end, ESBOCES will establish a Board Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Committee as well as an ESBOCES Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Advisory Council. This Advisory Council may include representation from various staff including administrators from across the Agency. The Board Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Committee and the ESBOCES Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Advisory Council will assist the administration in developing and implementing specific prevention initiatives, including the adoption and revision of policies and implementation of practices designed to promote diversity, prevent discrimination, assure equitable access to high quality staff, professional development, facilities and materials, in order to maximize all student achievement.

ESBOCES will continue to develop goals and corresponding metrics related to this policy within the Agency-wide strategic plan. ESBOCES will identify the multiple indicators necessary to monitor student outcomes, engagement, school climate, and specific data necessary to ensure accountability for student, school, and ESBOCES-wide performance.

With committee input, the District Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer are directed to develop and implement a plan for ensuring that equitable educational and professional opportunities are being provided to all students and employees. In addition, the Board directs that training programs be established for students, and employees, to raise awareness of the issues surrounding cultural responsiveness, diversity, equity and inclusion and to implement preventative measures to help counteract biases and practices that perpetuate disparities and lead to disproportionate levels of success. The Plan will endeavor to address how age-appropriate instructional materials will be incorporated into the curriculum to educate students so that they can learn from a diverse range of experiences and points of view.

The Board, the District Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer will monitor and review ESBOCES' metrics and equity activities to determine the extent to which ESBOCES programs are complying with this policy, and progress made toward attaining the goals of this policy. The District Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer will regularly report progress on the equity, inclusivity, and diversity plan and outcomes to the Board of Education (and associated sub-committees), Agency Committees, and other stakeholders of Eastern Suffolk BOCES. Based on those results, this policy, and the specific objectives set to meet its goals, may be revised as needed.

Equity Policy Communication

To be successful in this endeavor, it is imperative that all members of the ESBOCES community are aware of this policy, its purpose, procedures and ESBOCES commitment to diversity, equity and inclusivity by fostering a positive learning and professional environment that embraces all diverse, unique and individual differences.

The District Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer, or designee(s), are directed to ensure that this policy is communicated to students, staff, and the community. This policy will be posted on ESBOCES website, and will also be published in student registration materials, student, parent/person in parental relation and employee handbooks, and other appropriate ESBOCES publications.

Policy Enforcement

The Board directs the District Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer or designee(s) to enforce this policy and create regulations and practices to implement this policy. The Board will annually review ESBOCES implementation of this policy and take appropriate action to ensure compliance with and enforcement of this policy.

Equity Definitions

The following definitions have been taken from several sources, listed below. These definitions are offered to foster a deeper understanding of equity, inclusivity and diversity.

Achievement gap – refers to the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results and benefits – the outputs. Compare to Opportunity gap and Learning gap;

Culture - is defined as the multiple components of one's identity, including but not limited to: race, economic background, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and ability. Therefore, it far transcends practices such as cuisines, art, music, and celebrations to also include ways of thinking, values, and forms of expression;

Cultural competence - refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and is comprised of four components:

1. Awareness of your own cultural worldview;
2. Attitude towards cultural differences;
3. Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews; and
4. Cross-cultural skills.

Cultural responsiveness – acknowledges the presence of culturally diverse students and the need for students to find relevant connections among themselves and the subject matter and the tasks teachers ask them to perform;

Disaggregated data - means the numerical or non-numerical information that has been (1) collected from multiple sources and/or on multiple measures, variables, or individuals; (2) compiled into aggregate data i.e., summaries of data-typically for the purposes of public reporting or statistical analysis; and then (3) broken down in component parts or smaller units of data. For example, information about whether individual students graduated from high school can be compiled and summarized into a single graduation rate for a school or a graduating class, and annual graduation rates for individual schools can then be aggregated

into graduation rates for districts, states, and countries. Graduation rates can then be disaggregated to show, for example, the percentage of male and female students, or white and non-white students, who graduated. Generally speaking, data is disaggregated for the purpose of revealing underlying trends, patterns, or insights that would not be observable in aggregated data sets, such as disparities in standardized-test scores or enrollment patterns across different categories of students;

Disparities - mean the unequal outcomes of one subgroup (e.g., racial or ethnic groups) as compared to outcomes for another subgroup;

Disproportionality - is the underrepresentation or overrepresentation of a subgroup (e.g., racial or ethnic groups) compared to its percentage in the total population;

Diversity - is a reality created by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences. These differences can exist along dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, language heritage, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of difference contained within everyone. Finally, we acknowledge that categories of difference are not always fixed but can be fluid, and we respect individual rights to self-identification, as no one culture is intrinsically superior to another;

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. 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 lens - means an intentional focus on analyzing or diagnosing the impact of the design and implementation of policies on under-served and marginalized individuals and groups, and to identify and potentially eliminate barriers;

Historically marginalized - refers to individuals who have not been able, due to societal constraints, to compete fairly in society (definition created by NYSSBA);

Inclusive education - is education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honored and all individuals are respected. An inclusive school system ensures that each student can participate in the classroom and in the community in positive and contributing ways;

Implicit bias - is defined as a belief or attitude that affects our understanding, decision, and actions, and that exists without our conscious awareness;

Institutional racism - is racial inequity baked into our institutions, connoting a system of power that produces racial disparities in domains such as law, health, employment, education, and so on. It can take the form of unfair policies and practices, discriminatory

treatment and inequitable opportunities and outcomes. A school system that concentrates people of color in the most overcrowded and under-resourced schools with the least qualified teachers, compared to the educational opportunities of more advantaged students, is an example of institutional racism;

Internalized racism is the private racial beliefs held by and within individuals. The way we absorb social messages about race and adopt them as personal beliefs, biases, and prejudices are all within the realm of internalized racism. For people of color, internalized oppression can involve believing in negative messages about oneself or one's racial group. For Whites, internalized privilege can involve feeling a sense of superiority and entitlement or holding negative beliefs about people of color;

Learning gap - refers to relative performance of individual students – i.e., the disparity between what students have actually learned and what they were expected to learn at a particular age or grade level, as compared to "achievement gap" and "opportunity gap";

Microaggressions - are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. In many cases, these hidden messages may invalidate the group identity or experiential reality of targeted persons, demean them on a personal or group level, communicate the perception that they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong with the majority group, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment;

Opportunity gap - is the ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, or other factors contribute to or perpetuate lower educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students;

Rigor - is defined as instruction, schoolwork, learning experiences, and educational expectations that are academically, intellectually, and personally challenging. Rigorous learning experiences, for example, help students understand knowledge and concepts that are complex, ambiguous, or contentious, and they help students acquire skills that can be applied in a variety of educational, career, and civic contexts throughout their lives;

Socioeconomic status - is the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. Examinations of socioeconomic status often reveal inequities in access to resources, as well as issues related to privilege, power, and control;

Sociocultural responsiveness - involves the active sensitivity to what all students need to be successful academically, psychologically, emotionally, and socially. Such responsiveness recognizes that all students are different and must be uniquely responded to, challenged and stimulated, and strategies must be adapted to meet the needs of individual and groups of students;

Student engagement - is the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education. Generally speaking, the concept of "student engagement" is predicated on the belief that learning improves when

students are inquisitive, interested, or inspired, and that learning tends to suffer when students are bored, dispassionate, disaffected, or otherwise "disengaged";

SOURCES

1. The Glossary of Education Reform. (2014). An online resource produced by the Education Writers Association and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. Available at <https://www.edglossary.org> Accessed 4/15/2020
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3. Key Equity Terms and Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding. (2019). Center for the Study of Social Policy. Available at <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/equity-justice#glossary-of-terms> Accessed 6/25/2020
4. New York State's Final Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan Summary. (2018). New York State Education Department. Available at www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/essa/nys-essa-plan-summary.pdf Accessed 7/25/2020
5. Equity Lens. (2018). University of Minnesota. Available at <https://policy.umn.edu/equity-lens> Accessed 8/18/2020
6. Equity Toolkit for Administrators. (2010). Colorado Department of Education and the Office of Language, Culture and Equity. Available at https://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/cde_english/download/resources-links/equity%20toolkit%20final_2010.pdf Accessed 8/10/2020

References:

- Board Policy 5150 - Recruitment, Selection, and Appointment of Employees
- Board Policy 5381 - Registration and Professional Development
- Board Policy 6120 – Student Referral and Placement
- Board Policy 6130 – Equal Educational Opportunity (Students)
- Board Policy 7140 - Evaluation of Instructional Programs and Services
- Board Policy 7210 - Textbooks
- Administrative Regulation 5150R.1 – Recruitment, Selection, and Appointment of Employees

First Adopted: 5/19/2021