

**Section 1-5.1:2 Education Equity Defined; Guiding Questions; Equity Goals; Equity Measurements; Key Terms. — A.** The School Board defines education equity to mean fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all while striving to identify and eliminate barriers. In addition, the School Board recognizes that societal factors may influence student outcomes; therefore, the School Board endeavors to provide students with academic and social-emotional support to assist all students in meeting their goals and reaching their potential. The School Board believes it is the shared responsibility of the School Board, employees, parents, community stakeholders, and students to work towards equity in education and race.

B. In order to ensure that Suffolk Public Schools uses equity as a lens for resource allocation, staffing, and the creation of inclusive instructional environments, the school division will ask the following guiding questions as a part of the decision-making process:

- (1) Is there alignment with decisions related to equity and the school division's mission and vision statements?
- (2) What is the impact of decisions on stakeholders?
- (3) Are stakeholders included in the decision-making process?
- (4) Does Suffolk Public Schools provide the necessary resources to achieve equity?

C. Suffolk Public Schools will develop a plan to support equity by celebrating and fostering the understanding of community diversity and the individual needs of staff, students and schools. The Suffolk Public Schools equity plan will outline the following areas of focus: professional learning that focuses on culturally relevant instruction, the elimination of implicit bias, anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion in our schools and programs. The Suffolk Public Schools equity philosophy will focus on the following:

- (1) Active promotion of diversity and inclusion by examining the topic of institutional inequity. Professional learning for Suffolk Public Schools employees will relate to the process of resolving incidents of bias and harassment.
- (2) Analysis of demographic data related to student achievement, specialty program participation, gifted and advanced courses, and student behavior data.
- (3) Facilitation of community engagement events and activities for stakeholder input.
- (4) Development of an Equity Strategic Plan that identifies, reviews, and implements curricula, initiatives, resources, and efforts that provide equitable opportunity and support for students.
- (5) Analysis of current talent acquisition strategies in order to create a workforce that reflects the diversity of our community.
- (6) Review of current school board policies to include any necessary language to guide and support a focus on equity throughout the district.
- (7) Promotion of culturally relevant/responsive teaching and classroom practices that address inequities. To include the development and use of culturally responsive

material(s) that are inclusive and reflective of perspectives that may have been excluded or minimized historically within the curriculum.

- (8) Professional learning that focuses on building the capacity to understand and deliver culturally proficient instruction that allows employees to engage in self-reflective practices aligned to the educational equity goals of Suffolk Public Schools.
- (9) Development of the Suffolk Public Schools Equity Committee, inclusive of stakeholders such as Suffolk Public Schools employees, parents, students, and community members, to annually review metrics related to the equity policy. This committee will include a division-level equity lead and a school-level equity lead. The committee will meet on a regular basis and report to the Superintendent.
- (10) Development of an Equity Audit Tool that measures institutional practices that identifies discriminatory trends in data that affect students. The Equity Audit Tool will assist school leaders in assessing if the school provides the processes, information, and supports that create a positive learning environment so students and staff can perform at their highest level.

D. The following metrics may be used to measure the impact of the Suffolk Public Schools Equity Policy:

- (1) Allocated funding to schools predicated on the need to support all reporting groups for student achievement, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, social services, or program needs of the school.
- (2) Student enrollment by school and location.
- (3) Discipline data.
- (4) Professional learning that focuses on cultural competence and proficiency, culturally relevant instruction, building sustainable relationships, and the foundation of equity.

E. In the implementation of this policy, Suffolk Public Schools will take into account the following terms:

- **Anti-Racism:** Acknowledges that racist beliefs and structures are pervasive in all aspects of our lives and requires action to dismantle those beliefs and structures. This requires that school leaders hold educators and students accountable when they say and do things that make school unsafe, and that they dismantle systems perpetuating inequitable access to opportunity and outcomes for students historically marginalized by race.
- **Cultural Competency:** 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 country a tapestry.
- **Culturally Relevant/Responsive Teaching:** The behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. An approach that emphasizes using the cultural knowledge,

prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them.

- **Cultural Proficiency:** Environments that create opportunities for access, empowerment, and achievement by acknowledging, valuing, advocating, and empowering cultural diversity in all aspects of the educational process.
- **Diversity:** Recognizes differences and respects and values each individual irrelevant of their background including age, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and national origin.
- **Education Equity:** Eliminating the predictability of student outcomes based on race, gender, zip code, ability, socioeconomic status, or languages spoken at home.
- **Equity:** Just and fair inclusion into a society in which everyone can participate and prosper. The goals of equity must be to create conditions that allow all to achieve their potential, regardless of disparities in age, cognitive/physical ability, gender geography, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.
- **Implicit Bias:** An unconscious association, belief, or attitude toward any social group.
- **Inclusive School Communities:** Environments where all students, educators, and families feel supported and are extended a sense of belonging regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, identity, learning preferences, socio-economic status, or education.
- **Marginalized Students:** Those that have been systematically excluded and relegated to lower educational opportunities. In Virginia specifically, it is those groups of students who are overrepresented in VDOE's equity gap data and includes Black and Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students, English Learners, and students with disabilities.
- **Opportunity Gap:** Describes the complex issues that contribute to achievement gaps and recognizes the historical and societal implications of the way race and class influence the kind of education and access to support a student is likely to receive.
- **Racial Equity (Racial Justice):** The systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity. (Adopted August 12, 2021, Ordinance 21-22-18)

**Legal Authority** — Virginia Code § 22.1-78 (1950), as amended.