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Section 1-5.1:2. Education **Equity Opportunity Defined; Guiding Questions; **Equity Goals** Expressing cultural differences allowed; **Equity** Opportunity Measurements; **Key Terms.** —**

A. The School Board defines Education **equity** Opportunity to mean fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all students ~~while striving to identify and eliminate barriers~~ without considering the student's race, color or ethnicity. 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 race, color or ethnicity of a student will not be considered as a societal factor when providing students with academic and social-emotional support. 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** opportunity for all students without considering a student's race, color, or ethnicity.

B. In order to ensure that there is education opportunity for all students enrolled in Suffolk Public Schools, Suffolk Public Schools must take into consideration the following factors ~~uses equity as a lens for~~ when making decisions regarding resource allocation and 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** education opportunity as defined in this policy 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** education opportunity?

C. Employees of Suffolk Public Schools and students enrolled in Suffolk Public Schools are permitted to express their unique cultural differences but should not demean opposing cultural differences or viewpoints. ~~Suffolk Public Schools will develop a plan to support equity by allowing 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~~ In order to promote education opportunity, 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

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data. The demographic data should not consider the student's race, color or ethnicity.

- (3) Facilitation of community engagement events and activities for stakeholder input.
- (4) Development of an ~~Equity Strategie~~ Education Opportunity Plan that identifies, reviews, and implements curricula, initiatives, resources, and efforts that provide ~~equitable~~ education opportunity and support for all students without any regard for the student's race, color, or ethnicity.
- (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~~ education opportunity 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~~ Education Opportunity 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 policy regarding education opportunity. This committee will include a division-level ~~equity~~ education opportunity lead and a school-level ~~equity~~ education opportunity lead. The committee will meet on a regular basis and report to the Superintendent.
- (10) Development of an ~~Equity Audit~~ Education Opportunity Tool that measures institutional practices that identifies ~~discriminatory~~ trends in data ~~that affect~~ which indicates that students are not receiving educational opportunity. The ~~Equity Audit~~ Education Opportunity 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~~ Education Opportunity 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.

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- (3) Discipline data.
- (4) Professional learning that focuses on cultural competence as required by state law and regulations of the Virginia Board of Education, and **proficiency, culturally relevant instruction,** building sustainable relationships **and the foundation of equity.** with an emphasis on ensuring education opportunity for all students without considering the student's race, color or ethnic background.

E. In the implementation of this policy, Suffolk Public Schools will ~~take into account~~ consider 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. Virginia Code Section 22.1-298.7 requires school board employees holding a license issued by the Virginia Board of Education complete cultural competence training in accordance with guidance issued by the Virginia Board of Education.
- ~~**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 Opportunity:** ~~Eliminating the predictability of student outcomes based on race, gender, zip code, ability, socioeconomic status, or languages spoken at home.~~ Ensuring that all students will have equal opportunity to receive the benefits of a public education regardless of disparities in age, cognitive/physical ability, gender geography, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.
- ~~**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.~~

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- ~~• **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,~~ which includes 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.~~ when students are denied education opportunity.
- ~~**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.