

Engaging in Equity Discussions with Your Community



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What is educational equity?

Regardless of individual characteristics, identities, and circumstances, each and every student accesses and meaningfully participates in high quality learning experiences that empower self-determination and reduce outcome disparities.

Modification of Fraser, 2008; Great Lakes Equity Center, 2013

What is educational equity?

- Equity is a **condition** that we strive to meet
- The condition of equity is not fully realized in most school districts and is thought of as an **intended outcome**



What obligations do schools have?

- School districts are required by federal law to **disaggregate student data and strive to close gaps** between student groups.
- As the governing bodies of school districts, school boards have a **legal obligation within their governance role** to ensure this responsibility is undertaken.



Each student needs **different supports**, and that the same student may need **extra support in one area** but not in another, **or at one point in time** but not another time.

1. What do our communities need to know about educational equity?

2. How do we have productive conversations with them?

Educational equity is not new

- **1965 - The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)** was passed in 1965 to provide federal support for low-income students
- **2002 - “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB)** legislation was led and signed into law by former President George W. Bush
- **2015 - Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** further advanced the intent of NCLB to close opportunity gaps



Educational equity is for all students

Program • Law • Funding FEDERAL/STATE/LOCAL	Designed to support	Objective
Title I funding FEDERAL	Students from low-income households	Supplement (not supplant) state and local funding to ensure students from low-income families succeed academically
IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) FEDERAL/LOCAL	Students with disabilities	Support the needs of students with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21
McKinney-Vento STATE/FEDERAL	Students experiencing homelessness	Ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness are able to attend and fully participate in school
Student Discipline Data STATE	Students experiencing school disciplinary measures	Collect and disaggregate data by race, student characteristics, and program types to uncover and disproportionate discipline rates
Bilingual & Transitional Bilingual Programs - Title III, Part A STATE/FEDERAL	English-language learners	Improve and enhance the education of English language learners (ELLs) and immigrant students by helping them attain English proficiency
Advanced Placement (AP) College in the High School (CIHS) International Baccalaureate (IB) STATE/LOCAL	Highly-capable/ academically advanced students	Accelerate learning and provide advanced opportunities for students identified as Highly Capable.

Educational equity is for all students

Program • Law • Funding FEDERAL/STATE/LOCAL	Designed to support	Objective
Small High Funding Formula Small School Construction Grants STATE	Small school districts	Provide extra resources to support small and non-high school districts in providing comprehensive programs, services and facilities
Free and reduced-price meals FEDERAL	Students from low-income households	Ensure students receive meals at school regardless of ability to pay
Pupil Transportation STATE/LOCAL	All students	Provide free and safe transport for all students to and from school and school activities
Language Access STATE/LOCAL	All students	Ensure that families can fully engage in their child's education by receiving communications from schools in the language spoken at home
Children of Military Families STATE	Students from active duty and reserve military families	Support military youth in schools and communities before, during, and after the deployment of a parent or loved one
Career & Technical Education (CTE) STATE	All students, including those who are not college-bound	Provide students with hands-on education and training to create job and leadership skills and career goals right out of high school

Bring conversations back to what's happening
in your community, your schools



What are your district's educational equity priorities?

Program • Law • Funding FEDERAL/STATE/LOCAL	Designed to support	Objective

Q&A

What educational equity is and how to talk with your community about it

Up next: Communication skills & positive community engagement in public meetings



Engaging in Equity Discussions with Your Community

Positive Community Engagement in Public meetings

- School districts provide a wide variety of ways for constituents to share their values and priorities with educational decision-makers.
- There are no "silver bullets," but advance planning improves the odds that these interactions will be positive and productive.
- The following tips and reminders are generally focused on public meetings, but many of the concepts apply to community engagement in all settings.

Start with the basics



- What type of meeting are you facilitating?
- Be mindful about the order of items on the agenda
- Consider the room layout and seating arrangements
- Offer multiple avenues for comments and input

Help people be at their best

- Provide access to information in advance when possible
- Follow social media to minimize surprises
- Greet attendees warmly
- Set a respectful, civil tone with open body/facial language



Stay grounded in your role



- Be clear on your policy and procedures for meetings and comments
- Reaffirm process and behavior expectations as a matter of routine
- Remember who you serve – **your students**
- Remember who you represent – **your entire community**

Follow through on your commitments

- Verbally or visually make note of all follow-up actions
- Do what you say you will do (follow up!)

➔ If faced with serious disruption that renders orderly conduct impossible, boards have a variety of procedural options available, including clearing the room or adjourning and reconvening the meeting



We serve the entire community

Seeking and considering constituent input is a key leadership function. School leaders shape our families' and community members' experiences of our schools.

Our choices affect whether or not others feel heard, respected, and valued when they interact with us.

These times call for leaders who can listen to people who are emotionally charged without becoming dismissive, defensive, or emotionally charged ourselves.

- Learn and apply self-management and active listening skills.
- Seek coaching or practice these skills with another leader.

A few quick tips

- Really invest in dialogue this year. Provide multiple ways for constituents to share their thoughts with you
- You can use the "boomerang technique" to refocus a conversation or Q&A session
- A strong visual reference gives you and your audience a "third point" to focus on



Your math teacher was right: It's important to show your work!

- It is not enough to ask for input
- It is not even enough to act on that input
- You **MUST** demonstrate that you have listened well so that people know their perspective is being thoughtfully considered

Here's the formula:

1. When I or we first started to address this issue, we thought X (initial overview of the issue).
2. Early on, we learned A, B, and C (information that reshaped your thinking about this issue).
3. Along the way, we sought input from D, E, and F (constituent groups).



Demonstrating your listening, continued:

4. Themes we found in the input tended to focus on M and N (a couple examples of the most commonly shared priorities and/or concerns)
5. Based on all of this, we decided Y or we now think Z (note what is different as a result of constituent input, or point out that the input confirmed the initial thinking).



And, remember:

**Good self-care is a
leadership decision.**



Q&A

Communication skills
& positive community
engagement in public
meetings



Thank you for joining us