Essex Westford School District

EQUITY POLICY

Policy Code: C29

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Adoption:

Background:
The Essex Westford School District approaches equity through recognizing and **redressing** the impact of racism in the United States. This nation would not have evolved as it has without the **genocide** of the **indigenous people**, nor would the economic infrastructure exist as it does without the enslavement of native African people and their descendants. In an effort to recognize and undo the harm of centuries of **systemic inequities** and **oppression,** we begin with this lens and framework. EWSD recognizes the impact of systemic oppression of groups of people impacted by histories and current experiences of **marginalization** in addition to race including gender, abilities, and other identities. Given that identities are intersectional--meaning people have race, gender, abilities and other aspects of self, at the same time--this policy was developed to create equity in EWSD.

EWSD centers equity in policy, practice and environment. EWSD is committed to ongoing education internally and with the larger communities of Essex and Westford toward the goals of this policy.

Definition of Educational Equity:
Educational **equity** occurs when all students are provided with what they need in support of their academic, social-emotional and career development. Equity recognizes that economic, social, political, and educational historical and current practices have created inequities that require explicit, intentional intervention. Equity prioritizes visibility, voice, and empowerment of people and groups who are harmed by inequitable rules and behaviors by requiring fair, respectful, and just educational systems and practices. From a data perspective, educational equity means there is no predictability of success or failure that correlates with any social or cultural factor - a child's outcomes are not predictable because of their race, ethnicity, linguistic background, economic class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical or cognitive ability, or any other cultural marker.

This Policy serves to meet the following goals:

A. Inform curriculum decisions, including **anti-racist** education and LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual, +) affirming education, for educators and their students beginning in Pre-Kindergarten.
B. Redefine accountability procedures and frameworks to center transformation and redressing harm.
C. Support and protect people in **underserved**, marginalized positions while in school care.
D. Ensure family engagement is inclusive and centers the needs, experiences, and decision-making (both process and content) of people from communities who are systemically and structurally oppressed within the district.
E. Support and retain educators, administration, and staff from marginalized groups.
F. Ensures school environments reflect, appreciate, welcome, and protect diverse personal cultural expressions and experiences, including through food, language, music, art, and clothing.
G. Inform how EWSD schools celebrate and recognize cultural practices.

H. Describe methods to ensure faculty/staff/administrator understanding, growth and development as anti-racist, **culturally agile**, proficient, and responsive educators to create visibility and respect for all students in their educational environments.
I. EWSD will apply a transparent equity process to policies, procedures and practices throughout the district in all decision making and monitoring.

Indicators for progress monitoring:

When EWSD centers equity in policy, practice and environment:

- **Pluralistic**, **multicultural** education begins when schooling begins.
- The students, staff, administration, and faculty are diverse, therefore, education occurs with and from the foundational belief that equity is essential.
- Curriculum is diverse thus, responsive educators center impact on marginalized communities in curriculum selection.
- Accessibility of curriculum is a necessity for all learners, therefore, as instruction is designed, it must be designed for all students to be successful.
- Educators demonstrate cultural agility and **responsiveness**, and therefore, assignments into leadership roles are contingent upon this.
- All staff are supported through mandatory education on topics of **bias**, **stereotypes** and equity and therefore do not rely on students to educate them or others.
- EWSD operates from a **decolonized perspective** of the history between groups with specific attention to undoing **revisionist frameworks** that perpetuate inaccurate portrayals of people in **privileged** and **subjugated** positions.
- All students shall feel comfortable expressing their cultural heritage through food choices and other cultural and experiential markers of identity.
- Cultural humility, concepts of cultural diversity, visibility, and respect for all identities is integrated throughout both the curriculum and the year and is not limited to celebrations during particular times of the school year.
- **Affinity groups** for marginalized students and staff are part of the school structure.
- Discipline is **transformative**, **trauma-informed**, and driven by the need to foster student learning and development.
- Activities, services, policies, and practices are always developed and carried out by including and centering the needs and experiences of people from communities who are systemically and structurally oppressed within the district.
- Poverty is recognized as a **tool of oppression**. Educators will demonstrate the ability to remove inequity created by poverty in the classroom.

Procedure Development:

An EWSD Equity Advisory Committee for the EWSD Equity Policy will be established to direct in the development, monitoring, and adjustment of the procedure for implementation of this policy. As **non-dominant cultural** ways of being or doing are centered in this policy it is important that EWSD maintains consistent alignment and connection between policy and procedure. As such, an EWSD Equity Advisory Committee shall be designed, and empowered to inform administrative decision-making.

Monitoring

All elements of this policy shall be tracked and reported quarterly. An EWSD Equity Monitoring Report will be published annually to the EWSD community and to the Equity Advisory Committee.

EWSD Equity Policy Glossary of Bolded Terms

Please recognize that as community and culture evolves, language and definitions change, too. This glossary is intended to support understanding of the EWSD Equity Policy. Listed as they appear in the document, the following definitions are offered.

Term	Definition
Redressing	A remedy or set right an undesirable or unfair situation.
Genocide	The deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular nation, ethnic or religious group or other group who hold a common identity with the aim of destroying that nation or group.
Indigenous people	First people, Aboriginal people, and Native people who are a culturally distinct ethnic group who are native to a particular place rather than descended from migrants or colonists.
Systemic inequities	Outcomes that occur when the fabric of organizations, institutions, governments or social networks contains an embedded bias which provides advantages for some members and marginalizes or produces disadvantages for other members.
Oppression	Prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control of a person, people, or nation.
Marginalization	The unjust exercise of authority or power. Often refers specifically to abuse of power with a systemic and historical expression. The combination of prejudice and institutional power which creates a system that discriminates against some groups (often called “marginalized groups”) and benefits other groups (often called “dominant groups”).
Equity	Distributing resources, power and decision making to marginalized groups or individuals in order to redress marginalization.
Underserved	Provided with inadequate service to experience equitable outcomes.
Anti-racist	An anti-racist is someone who is supporting an antiracist policy, practices and behaviors through their actions by expressing and acting on ideas that counteract racism and systemic racism. This includes the expression of ideas that racial groups are equals and do not need developing.
Culturally agile	A dual consciousness that understands one’s own culture and cultural assumptions as well as a basic understanding of cross-cultural differences and the ability to adapt or modify one’s behavior to effectively relate to and value culturally diverse others as equal to their own.
Pluralistic	Relating to or advocating a system in which two or more states, groups, principles, sources of authority, etc., coexist without hierarchy.
Multicultural	The coexistence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviours, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles.
Responsiveness	The quality of reacting quickly and positively.
Bias	Prejudice in favor of or against a person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.

Stereotypes	An exaggerated or distorted belief that attributes generalized and simplistic characteristics to members of a particular group, ignoring their individual differences.
Decolonized perspectives	The active resistance against colonial powers defining the lens of history, policy, law, and practices through a shifting of power towards political, economic, educational, cultural, and power that originate from a colonized nation's own indigenous culture.
Revisionist frameworks	A criticism of the history being presented through the lens of the historians and organizations represented through colonists and dominant cultures in a colonized nation.
Privileged positions	Unearned social power afforded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because they are taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.
Subjugated positions	Situations where your identities and beliefs are treated as less important than other people in dominant societal norms.
Affinity groups	Locations where groups of people are drawn together because of a shared, strong interest or engagement in a common activity or lived experience.
Transformative	Causing a marked change in someone or something.
Trauma-informed	Education that recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role trauma may play in an individual's life.
Tools of oppression	Individual and systemic mechanisms for maintaining power or dominance over a group of people. For example, poverty/ denying accumulation of wealth can be used to deny people access to power and opportunity. Unfair wage practices are one example of how systems engage in tools of oppression.
Non-Dominant culture	Cultures within a community whose values, beliefs, ways of knowing, thinking, being and/or doing are not reflected. These attributes are actively or unconsciously oppressed by the dominant culture. This results in a lack of representation in education, artistic expression, political process, decision making communication, and business.

Citations:
VSA Title 16 Chapter 1: Right to Educational Opportunity
Vermont State Board Rule 2000 EDUCATION QUALITY STANDARDS
Vermont State Board Rule 2100 STATUTORY AUTHORITY 16 V.S.A. §§164 and 165
Vermont State Board Rule 2110 Statement of Purpose
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)