

We believe that educational equity is a journey and not a destination. It is important for every school and community to be on that journey. There is no community in the U.S. whose people are not touched by the historical inequities that have been intentionally built into our systems; therefore, if we want our schools to deliver an empowering education to all students, all schools must know how to recognize and dismantle the inequities that exist.

How to Use This Tool

The following is a list of actions, attitudes, and strategies (or indicators) that school communities might take when fighting inequity. This is not a comprehensive list; use it to spark and not to limit your thinking. Schools and districts can use this list to determine if they are taking steps that will lead to an equitable system of education. These actions, attitudes, and strategies may be taken by a variety of members within a school community: from an individual bus driver or a team of teachers to the superintendent of schools, the collective district staff, or various community members.

What is Educational Equity

The Great Schools Partnership definition of educational equity consists of 20 actionable words. If these indicators of educational equity are non-existent in your school, educational equity is, too.

Educational equity means ensuring just outcomes for each student, raising marginalized voices, and challenging the imbalance of power and privilege.

Ensuring Just Outcomes

- The school's program of studies is designed to ensure that all learning pathways will enable all students to meet rigorous standards.
- All educators use common learning outcomes and success criteria written in student-friendly language to ensure that all students engage in cycles of complex thinking, rigorous learning, practice, feedback, revision, and re-assessment when needed.
- The school has a system of support that identifies student learning needs and provides effective, timely interventions, both inside and outside the classroom, that impact student learning.
- The school's grading system is designed to give students, caregivers, and teachers meaningful feedback about their progress toward meeting learning outcomes, not to punish or sort students into levels.
- Students are taught how to integrate, practice, and apply what they have learned within and across content areas and are given opportunities to wrestle with complex and authentic problems.
- Educators regularly review student work and performance data, and take action to address students' learning needs.
- Educators regularly review discipline, attendance, achievement, and other data to combat biased policies and practices.

- Schools and educators proactively communicate with caregivers and students about academic performance and well-being, using multiple means of communication appropriate for caregivers' culture and language.
- Students of color are represented in advanced classes, student leadership, and other high-prestige programs in proportion to their representation in the school as a whole.
- Each student meets regularly with advisors, counselors, and mentors who help guide their learning and help them explore post-graduation plans and goals.

Raising Marginalized Voices

- When talking to and about students, all educators use asset-based language and approaches.
- All educators work to design a safe, brave, and supportive learning environment by building relationships, listening to students and caregivers, and employing asset-based and restorative approaches to teaching, learning, and behavior.
- Staff and students are supported in learning about the lives, cultures, and ways of being of their students, families, and caregivers, as well as the community where they teach, work, and live.
- Students feel a sense of safety, belonging, and ownership of their learning and connect their learning to their own lives and goals.
- Educators design learning that fosters understanding of diverse cultures, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and the ways in which systemic racism affects the lives of people who live in America.
- Students see themselves represented in the curriculum and learning materials used in all content areas, and explore and question their own beliefs and experiences about race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability.
- When designing policies and programs, educators seek out and center the feedback of marginalized voices in the school community.
- Students, caregivers, and educators know how to report instances of bias and trust the process for addressing and repairing harm.
- The diversity of the student population is reflected in clubs, extracurricular activities, and other groups, and students are encouraged and supported to create new groups to meet the needs of underrepresented identities.

Challenging the Imbalances of Power and Privilege

- The school board works to understand how systems of oppression appear in the educational system and supports educators in disrupting and dismantling them.
- The district has worked collaboratively with the school board and community to develop and implement an equity statement and policy, as well as systems of support and accountability.
- The school district values, provides, and requires ongoing anti-racism and anti-bias training and learning.
- Educators have dedicated time to explore and discuss their own identities and the impact of privilege and implicit bias on their students and school culture.
- The district partners with community organizations to provide opportunities for community-wide discussions of anti-racism and anti-bias.

- Members of the school community recognize and interrupt implicit and explicit prejudicial and harmful language or actions, such as microaggressions or bullying of individuals and groups—in classrooms and throughout the school.
- School hiring and retention practices are deliberately focused on increasing the diversity (race, gender, orientation, physical ability, religion, etc.) of the educator and leadership workforce.
- The school and district supports, connects, and inspires educators of color in a variety of ways, including access to racial affinity groups.
- Students, families, and caregivers participate in and contribute to collaborative planning and decision-making opportunities that are offered by the district.
- Educators ask for and act on student feedback on classroom, school, and district practices, procedures, and policies.
- Students have opportunities to select, co-create, and design their own learning experiences.
- Educators work with students to establish and uphold classroom and school-wide cultures that challenge imbalances of power and privilege.
- Educators act as allies to develop youth leadership, and students with marginalized identities are represented proportionally in leadership roles and student organizations.
- The school uses systems for addressing and repairing harm and restoring trust when members of the school community have been impacted by bias.

Definition of Terms

Asset-based approaches	Asset-based approaches are grounded in what students can do rather than what they can't. It is a direct response to deficit models that were especially harmful to marginalized students. Educational equity requires us to view student differences as assets, not deficits.
Educators	Educators are all staff who work in a school, in any role. This includes front office staff, bus drivers, and other staff who may sometimes be seen as educational support staff.
Implicit Bias	Bias, as defined by the Kirwin Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity , "refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner."
Marginalized Identities	Cornell University defines marginalized identities as, "Members of social identity groups who are discriminated against, treated as insignificant, excluded, oppressed, classified in defined roles, or exploited by an oppressor and the oppressor's system of institutions without identity apart from the target group."
Microaggressions	Microaggressions, as defined by Project Ready , "...are subtle verbal or nonverbal insults or denigrating messages communicated toward a marginalized person, often by someone who may be well-intentioned but unaware of the impact their words or actions have on the target."
Racial Affinity Groups	A racial affinity group is a group of people sharing a common race who gather with the intention of finding connection, support, and inspiration. Racial affinity groups can happen within any profession or organization, including education.

System of Oppression	According to the Racial Equity Tools Glossary , a system of oppression is “the systematic subjugation of one social group by a more powerful social group for the social, economic, and political benefit of the more powerful social group.”
Systemic Racism	The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation defines systemic racism as “racism that is pervasively and deeply embedded in systems and structures such as laws, written or unwritten policies, and widespread, deeply rooted, established practices, beliefs, and attitudes that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment of people of color.”